

REMARKS

The Examiner is respectfully requested to enter the foregoing amendment prior to examination of the above-identified patent application.

Claims 1, 3-12 and 14-22 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 10 and 21 have been canceled and claims 1 and 12 have been amended. No new matter is presented. Claims 1, 3-9, 11-12, 14-20 and 22 are pending and respectfully submitted for consideration.

In the Office Action dated September 7, 2006, Isogai et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,594,574 B2, "Isogai") was cited for teaching deceleration determination as being associated with a fuel-cut control device which determines a deceleration condition.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite that the engine operation controller switches engine operation to the full-cylinder operation if deceleration is required by the running controller when a supply of fuel to the engine is cut off.

Claim 12, as amended, recites the method wherein the step of engine operation control switches engine operation to the full-cylinder operation if deceleration is required by the step of running control when a supply of fuel to the engine is cut off.

The Applicants respectfully submit that Isogai fails to teach the above features of the invention as recited in amended claims 1 and 12.

As disclosed on page 15, line 24 to page 16, line 6 of the Specification of the present application, in S206, it is determined whether the fuel cutoff is in progress (i.e., the supply of fuel is discontinued) and if the determination result is negative, the program advances to S202. This is because engine output torque becomes zero if the supply of fuel is cut off. In the control in this embodiment, therefore, in order to utilize

the increase of engine loss (pumping loss) obtained by switching the operation to the full-cylinder operation most effectively, switching to the full-cylinder operation is only conducted when the fuel cutoff is in progress. When the determination result is affirmative in S206, since this also indicates deceleration is required by the running controller (it is under the running condition in which the vehicle needs to decelerate), the program advances to S208.

Thus, claims 1 and 12 now recite that in order to use the increase of engine loss (pumping loss) obtained by switching the operation to the full-cylinder operation most effectively, switching to the full-cylinder operation is only conducted when the fuel cutoff is in progress.

The Office Action cited Isogai for teaching a vehicle control arrangement and process wherein under a desired deceleration condition, a fuel-cut mode is engaged. See page 4, paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Office Action dated September 7, 2006. The Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Isogai merely discloses a fuel-cut mode that is established at a specific condition. There is no disclosure or suggestion in Isogai of the engine operation controller switching engine operation to the full-cylinder operation if deceleration is required by the running controller when a supply of fuel to the engine is cut off. Specifically, Isogai merely discloses that fuel is cut but does not disclose the feature of the engine operation controller and running controller, as recited in claims 1 and 12. As such, the combination of references does not disclose or suggest the features of the invention as recited in amended claims 1 and 12. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request allowance of claims 1 and 12.

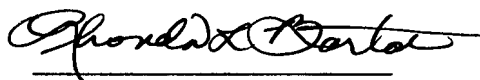
Conclusion

The Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 12 are allowable. Claims 3-9 and 11 depend from claim 1 and claims 14-20 and 22 depend from claim 12. The Applicants further submit that each of these claims incorporate the patentable aspects thereof, and are therefore allowable for the reasons submitted above. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections, allowance of claims 1, 3-9, 11-12, 14-20 and 22 and the prompt issuance of a Notice of Allowability.

Should the Examiner believe anything further is desirable in order to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension, together with any additional fees that may be due with respect to this paper, may be charged to counsel's Deposit Account No. 01-2300, **referencing Attorney Dkt. No. 107101-00052.**

Respectfully submitted,



Rhonda L. Barton
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 47,271

Customer No. 004372

ARENT FOX LLP

1050 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 400

Washington, D.C. 20036-5339

Tel: (202) 857-6000

Fax: (202) 638-4810

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Enclosure: Petition for Extension of Time (one-month)